

ArtsWA
Community Consortium Grant
Program Evaluation

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Washington State Arts Commission*

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Executive Summary

OVERVIEW

The Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA) is a publicly-funded organization with goals that include strengthening K-12 arts education and expanding arts participation in communities across the state. According to the strategic plan, “ArtsWA connects the professional arts community with the K-12 education community, supports arts learning partnerships, develops the arts teaching workforce, and collaborates on the development and dissemination of strong arts education policies and practices.”¹ To that end, ArtsWA seeks to: support local partnerships among arts organizations, schools and community organizations; and support and develop the arts teaching workforce of classroom teachers, teaching artists and arts education leaders; and engage with regional, state-level and national arts and education organizations to develop, align and promote policies related to supporting K-12 arts education.²

Fifteen years ago, ArtsWA established the Community Consortium Grant program to “assist community arts and education partners in building and sustaining arts education in their local schools. Consortium programs often involve multiple arts organizations or agencies, teaching artists, schools and/or districts, parents, and other community partners.”³ The 19 current grantees of the Community Consortium Grant program are quite diverse. Their organizations are large and small, rural and urban, new and established, stand-alone and embedded in systems. Their programs address different forms of visual and performing arts and different grade bands within the Pre-K to 12 range. They use a wide array of program objectives and implementation formats. Through this diversity, ArtsWA broadly impacts arts education across the state and has the opportunity to observe a variety of approaches to arts education and a range of implementation models. Many grantees indicated the ability to tailor their programs to the needs of their schools and communities and to maximize local involvement and resources is central to the success of their programs.

ArtsWA commissioned an evaluation of the Community Consortium Grant program as they consider the intentions and public value of the program. Focusing on the 19 current grantees, this evaluation studied the outcomes of the grant program, particularly the impact on student and teacher learning and on the grantee organizations and consortia partnerships. Evaluation activities, which included interviews and document review, were determined by the goals of the evaluation, the evaluation questions, and the type of data currently generated by the program, which is primarily qualitative.

¹ <http://www.arts.wa.gov/about/strategic-plan.shtml>

² <http://www.arts.wa.gov/about/strategic-plan.shtml>

³ <http://www.arts.wa.gov/education/index.shtml>

GRANT IMPLEMENTATION FINDINGS

Evaluation results suggest grant implementation levels are high for the current grantees. Most grantees and partners reported meeting implementation goals for FY 2012, in spite of a variety of challenges, and a few reported exceeding target numbers of students or educators served by their program. All grantees maintained their consortia and carried out plans to improve arts learning for students and educators. They provided curricula and student assessments, instruction in arts and integrated learning, opportunities for field experiences, and professional development for classroom teachers. Only a few stated they did not meet their targets or full implementation plans due to specific contextual factors.

GRANT IMPACT FINDINGS

Grantee Partnerships. All grantees reported growth over time in the number or quality of partners through the grant. Those with established partnerships found the grant provided a common focus for their work, while newer partnerships used the grant to develop and deepen collaborative relationships. Some consortia formalized oversight or advisory groups. While the extent and focus of collaboration varies across consortia, collaboration typically includes one or more of the following activities: developing programs, designing curricula, providing access to performances and exhibitions, providing instruction to teachers or students, obtaining resources, providing program feedback, and reviewing program progress.

Grantees and partners, alike, reported that the consortia model is fundamental to their project and goals as it allows each partner to increase their impact through shared expertise, knowledge, and efforts. In fact, a number of programs and partnerships have expanded in scope and quality through these grants, reaching larger numbers of students and teachers with higher quality programs aligned with learning standards. This is most evident where grantees reported consistent communication between the arts organizations and the school or school system. The grants have also indirectly facilitated networks among partner organizations which has reinforced the community's informal infrastructure in the arts.

Grantee Learning Assessments and Program Evaluation. Each grantee reported conducting some level of learning assessment and program evaluation. Data collection practices, as well as strategies for ongoing program improvement, differ widely, and most grantees reported their program evaluation efforts are still under development. They valued the information and professional development in program evaluation they have received from ArtsWA through the grant program. Most reported improving program monitoring efforts through participation in the grant.

Grantee Learning Outcomes. Because grantees collect diverse qualitative and quantitative data, it is not possible to aggregate learning outcomes data across programs. However, grantees cited salient qualitative and quantitative findings, as well as anecdotal reports, reflecting the impact of their programs on students, teachers, teaching artists,

school and district personnel, schools and school districts. For students, grantees and partners provided examples of improvement in four main areas: arts learning and engagement, learning in other content areas, development of learning skills, and personal development. According to grantees, teachers reported greater understanding of arts learning standards, arts vocabulary and concepts, and the intersections between the arts and other content areas. Teachers have learned new assessment techniques, as well as the importance of tying assessments to target outcomes. Some grantees reported that teachers have applied this learning to other arts lessons as well as other content areas. Teaching artists have deepened their understanding of state standards in the arts, as well as standards from other content areas integrated with the arts curricula. They also learned instructional techniques and approaches to student evaluation and outcomes assessment.

According to some grantees and partners, the programs have fostered greater awareness of and alignment with state arts standards in their schools and districts. Some described stronger vertical alignment and feeder paths, where programs cover consecutive grade bands. They also reported including increased parent and community parent engagement with the schools. Several program coordinators have received requests from schools or school districts to expand their services because of the positive impact perceived by school or district personnel.

The grants have impacted the grantee organizations, themselves. Grantees and partners are more familiar with school systems, education frameworks, learning standards, and program evaluation methods, and this awareness enables them to adjust their programs to the local needs. They consult education research more frequently for program design and advocacy. Most organizations leverage ArtsWA funding to procure additional interest and funding from other stakeholders. A number of program coordinators and partners mentioned the program improvements they have implemented because of grant-related activities sponsored by ArtsWA. The activities have helped them clarify program objectives, values, and outcomes and develop their approaches to assessment and program evaluation. All grantees reported learning more about current approaches to arts instruction and curricula.

Grantee Sustainability Planning and Knowledge-Sharing. On the whole, grantees were aware of the importance of sustainability planning and considered the capacity to maintain their current programs and to expand them in this context. The extent to which sustainability plans are in place appears to be partly a function of organizational capacity and resources. Grantees reported actively seeking additional external support, and some have successfully leveraged ArtsWA funding and evidence of their program's progress to obtain additional financial support. Almost all grantees envisioned growth for their programs. Most indicated their programs remain highly dependent on continued ArtsWA funding. Grantees' knowledge-sharing efforts include raising awareness of the project and sharing expertise by disseminating learning or materials associated with the projects. While these efforts vary across grantees, they increase the value of these grants to the larger arts education community and serve as outreach which can help support program sustainability.

Contextual Factors. Grantees reported a number of factors that have supported implementation and impact of their programs, such as active public support from school and district leaders. Factors that present challenges to these programs include ongoing funding issues, staff turnover in schools, and changes in partner organizations. The organizational context of the grantee affects implementation, impact, and their own viability. For example, those within larger organizations are subject to changes in status, changes in the mission of the parent organization, and competition within the organization. On the other hand, these programs have access to resources and stability smaller or independent grantees may lack.

Feedback on Grant Program. Finally, grantees provided feedback on the grant program, itself. They described grant leadership as strong, effective, and responsive. They also valued the annual grantee convenings for networking, mentoring, and the content presented. Several would like additional opportunities to meet with other grantees and for professional development as a cohort. Grantees praised the advocacy efforts of the ArtsWA staff and intend to expand their own advocacy efforts. Overall, grantees noted that participation in the grant program has encouraged them to continually evaluate their procedures, to maintain and develop new partners, and to evaluate programs and impact.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation results suggest a few key recommendations. While some may require additional resources, they will enable ArtsWA to maximize and document the existing investment of the Community Consortium Partnership Grant program. Recommendations focus on steps for supporting grantee program evaluation and substantive evaluation of the grant program, itself. Effective and ongoing program evaluation at both levels will help ensure the grant program maximizes outcomes. The recommendations also address program expansion and knowledge-sharing, which are two sides of the same coin: program success. A number of grantees have received requests for additional services because of their success and are considering expansion. At the same time, there is a great wealth of untapped expertise among these grantees that could be useful to schools and districts and the organizations that wish to serve them. It would expand the outcomes of the grant program to support expansion and knowledge-sharing. This would require additional resources but may, in the long run, optimize the investment.

Finally, ArtsWA is interested in the public value of the Community Consortium Partnership Grant program. If public value is defined as benefits to the public education system, to the children in local K-12 schools, and to communities, grantee reports offer a number of examples. Educators and education systems benefit from deeper understanding of state arts learning standards, as well as opportunities to improve teacher practice. Increased accountability for grantee programs raises expectations for these organizations and their partnerships, which benefits the community. The programs also report stronger engagement of students, parents, and the community in various aspects of education, including student learning and public-private partnerships that support that learning.

Introduction

The Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA) is a publicly-funded organization that provides leadership and support for the arts. According to the mission statement, “The Washington State Arts Commission serves the public as a catalyst for the arts, advancing the role of the arts in the lives of individuals and communities statewide.”⁴ Further, ArtsWA “advances and supports arts and culture in Washington State through leadership, knowledge, funding, and resources that build participation in and access to the arts. We improve community vitality, aesthetics, and education by supporting high quality arts and arts education endeavors.” The goals of ArtsWA include strengthening K-12 arts education and expanding arts participation in communities across the state. The strategic plan includes the following goal and related objectives:

ArtsWA connects the professional arts community with the K-12 education community, supports arts learning partnerships, develops the arts teaching workforce, and collaborates on the development and dissemination of strong arts education policies and practices.

- Support local partnerships among arts organizations, schools and community organizations to strengthen high quality arts learning approaches.
- Support and develop the arts teaching workforce of classroom teachers, teaching artists and arts education leaders.
- Engage with regional, state-level and national arts and education organizations to develop, align and promote policies related to supporting K-12 arts education.⁵

Fifteen years ago, ArtsWA established the Community Consortium Grant program, which continues to inform and respond to ArtsWA’s education goals. The purpose of this grant program is to “assist community arts and education partners in building and sustaining arts education in their local schools. Consortium programs often involve multiple arts organizations or agencies, teaching artists, schools and/or districts, parents, and other community partners.”⁶ These two-year grants provide funding, professional development, and a network of peer organizations for partnerships committed to enhancing arts learning for K-12 students and educators.

Interested in understanding the impact of the Community Consortium Grant program, ArtsWA commissioned this evaluation to study grant outcomes, particularly the impact on student and teacher learning and on the grantee organizations and consortia partnerships. The impetus for this evaluation emerged as ArtsWA personnel consider the intentions of the grant program, the actual grant outcomes, the larger role of the grant program in the mission of ArtsWA, and, in particular,

⁴ <http://www.arts.wa.gov/about/vision.shtml>

⁵ <http://www.arts.wa.gov/about/strategic-plan.shtml>

⁶ <http://www.arts.wa.gov/education/index.shtml>

the program's public value. This evaluation, which describes current grant outcomes, is part of the effort toward aligning intentions, outcomes, and values. Currently, there are 19 Community Consortium grantees, and they were the focus of this study. Nine questions guided this evaluation. For the purpose of this report, "arts" refers to both visual and performing art forms.

1. What are the intentions and goals of the Community Consortium Grant program?
2. What are the characteristics of the Community Consortium grantee cohort?
3. What are the characteristics of the grant-funded Community Consortium partnerships?
4. What are the characteristics of the arts learning for K-12 students and educators in the Community Consortium grant-funded projects?
5. To what extent do grantees establish effective partnerships?
6. To what extent do grantees use assessment and evaluation for program improvement?
7. To what extent does arts learning improve for K-12 students and educators?
8. To what extent are grantees addressing sustainability of grant-supported activities?
9. To what extent are grantees engaged in knowledge-sharing?

Evaluation activities were determined by the goals of the evaluation, the evaluation questions, and the type of data currently generated by the program, which is primarily qualitative. The following activities were used to determine grant implementation and impact:

- Interviews with ArtsWA Executive Director and Education Program Manager
- Review of ArtsWA Community Consortium Grant documents
- Phone interviews with program coordinators of 19 current Community Consortium grantees
- Phone interviews with a partner representative of 12 current Community Consortium grantees
- Review of Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 annual reports and supporting materials submitted by 19 current Community Consortium grantees

Interviews with program coordinators and partner representatives began with a briefing on the purpose and design of the evaluation. Interviewees were also informed that the evaluation was being conducted by an external, third-party evaluator and that the information they provided would be confidential and incorporated anonymously into the evaluation summary.

Background

Evaluation Question 1: What are the intentions and goals of the Community Consortium Grant program?

The Community Consortium Grant program supports projects that “include a variety of components designed to impact long-term, systemic improvements in arts education at the participating schools.”⁷ Funded projects generally focus on project planning, foundation building, student learning in the arts, and/or professional development. Each grantee is a non-profit organization or a government education entity that actively collaborates with a few core partners.

The grant program focuses on projects that support or improve in-school arts education with the goals of rendering it effective, sustainable, and aligned with the state arts standards. Active and committed community partnerships, as well as school district support and involvement, are essential. Plans must be long-term, include a local focus, and promote current best practices. ArtsWA identifies two key outcomes for the grant-supported programs:

- Impact arts learning for K-12 students and educators, in which students are engaged in deep and long-term experiences, participate in authentic creative processes, and develop creative habits of mind and 21st century skills in addition to EALR (Essential Academic Learning Requirements) aligned arts skills.
- Collaborative effort and joint ownership among consortium partners, in which authentic partnerships result in shared goals and shared responsibilities, and support for meaningful K-12 arts education is built and supported throughout the community.⁸

⁷ Community Consortia grant Application Guidelines, Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013

⁸ <http://www.arts.wa.gov/education/consortium.shtml>

Evaluation Results

To understand the outcomes of the Community Consortium Grant program, this evaluation gathered data pertaining to grant program implementation and impact. Grant program implementation includes the characteristics of the grantees and their programs, while grant program impact focuses on grant outcomes.

GRANT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Evaluation Question 2: What are the characteristics of the Community Consortium grantee cohort?

Currently, there are 19 grantees for the 2012-2013 fiscal grant cycle. These grantees differ on a number of key variables, including organizational size, years in existence, geographical location, rural or urban setting, target population, and specific arts focus. Grantee organizations also differ considerably in structure. They may exist within a larger education or arts entity, be stand-alone organizations that support multiple programs such as this grant, or be partnerships formed specifically for the grant project. Consequently, they also differ notably in funding and personnel resources. Many of the current cohort have received ArtsWA funding for a number of years. Table 1 lists grantees with the number of years funded. The majority are in western Washington.

Table 1.
Community Consortia Grantees, FY 2012 and 2013

Grantee	Years Funded
Allied Arts of Whatcom County	11
Bainbridge Island Arts and Humanities Council	12
Book-It Repertory Theatre	2
Elements of Education SOTA Partners	8
Jack Straw Productions	14
Macha Monkey Productions	4
Methow Arts Alliance	14
Museum of Northwest Art	7
Orient Elementary School	11
Pacific Northwest Ballet	13
Port Townsend School District #50	13
Puget Sound Educational Services District	14
Seattle Repertory Theatre	13
South Kitsap School District	4
Spokane Symphony Society	13
Tenino School District #402	2
Vashon Allied Arts	14
Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center	7
White Salmon School District	5

ArtsWA collects a subset of implementation data per the request of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) which provides funding for this grant program. Table 2 shows the FY 2012 data collected by ArtsWA for their annual report to the NEA. It is important to note that the data points requested by the NEA may be interpreted differently across grantees, and this may account for the wide range on some data points. Further analyses of the data shows there are a few outliers at the higher end of the range.

Table 2.
National Endowment of the Arts Requested Community Consortia Program Data FY 2012

NEA Data Point	N	Range (Minimum – Maximum)	Mean	Total
<i>Students</i>				
Number of students who received high quality, standards-aligned arts instruction through ArtsWA funding	19	50 – 7540	1,555.5	29,555
Number of additional students benefiting from this project	19	0 – 4967	1,143.2	21,270
<i>Teachers</i>				
Number of K-12 teachers who learned techniques for teaching arts concepts through ArtsWA funding	19	4 – 635	73.5	1,396
Number of additional educators benefiting from this project	19	0 – 643	86.1	1,635
<i>Artists</i>				
Number of artists directly involve in providing services for this project	19	3 – 1348	91.6	1,741
Number of additional artists benefiting as audience	19	0 – 392	39.9	758
<i>Community/Others</i>				
All others benefiting	19	0 – 18,137	3,138.0	59,622
<i>Total</i>	19	169 – 33,398	6,127.7	116,427
<i>Local Artists and Public Events</i>				
Of the total number of artists participating and benefiting, how many were artists who live in Washington State?	19	1 – 1,319	99.5	1,890
Number of public events associated with this project	19	0 – 83	10.6	202

Evaluation Question 3: What are the characteristics of the grant-funded Community Consortium partnerships?

According to grant materials, “an ideal Community Consortium includes a number of core partners who work together to develop shared goals, and collaborate on the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of [partnership] efforts. The primary partners are often contributors to the process, either in funding support or with in-kind goods or services. The basic partnerships should include these three elements:

- One or more professional arts organizations, at least one of which is local;
- One or more public schools or school districts, or an Educational Service District (ESD); and
- A local PTA [Parent Teacher Association] or other parent representation, or other community representation.⁹

ArtsWA suggests additional partners may include local arts agencies, community organizations (e.g. library, college, social service organization), arts education consultants, professional teaching artists, or representation from other relevant local initiatives, foundations, businesses, or other entities.

Some partnerships were newly-formed for this grant, while others have been in place for decades. Current partnerships generally follow ArtsWA specifications and include schools or school districts, cultural or arts organizations, and community organizations or businesses. There is some variation in remote areas, where cultural, arts, and community organizations are less prevalent, and ArtsWA has allowed for this latitude. Typically, a few primary partners are responsible for oversight and implementation of the program(s). All grantees have additional, secondary partnerships that expand the capacity, reach, resources, and expertise of the Community Consortium partners. These include cultural or arts organizations, arts-related businesses (e.g. a commercial gallery), community businesses, community non-profit organizations, or education organizations.

A number of these programs benefit special populations including low-income students, students in special education, visually-impaired students, and students living in remote areas. A subset of the programs address cultural competence by exposing students to other cultures, particularly those of the local community, or by providing opportunities to explore their own and share them with others.

All grantees reported meeting most or all of their implementation goals during FY 2012. Although funding started later in the year than originally anticipated, most were able to carry out program activities as originally planned, even if on an altered schedule. A few grantees reported exceeding their goal for the number of students or teachers served.

Evaluation Question 4: What are the characteristics of the arts learning for K-12 students and educators in the Community Consortium grant-funded projects?

All Community Consortium grantees implement programs aimed at improving student learning and outcomes in the arts. All programs provide opportunities for students to develop and produce art, such as visual art, performances, or written objects (e.g. scripts). However, beyond these core elements, programs differ in many ways. While several focus exclusively on one art form, the majority are multidisciplinary. Arts may be taught independently or integrated into other subject areas, such as reading or math. Learning may occur in ongoing, periodic, or short-term intensive formats. While all programs address K-12 learning, implementation may occur only at specific grade levels or specific schools, and some programs offer learning opportunities outside the

⁹ Community Consortia grant Application Guidelines, Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013

school day in addition to their in-school program. Participation may occur on a teacher-by-teacher basis or may be based on a whole-school or whole-district model. A number of programs provide opportunities for public viewing of student art through exhibitions or performances. A number also include opportunities for students to develop skills as observers or audience members through visits to galleries or museums or by attending performances.

For educators, Community Consortia programs provide professional development in a variety of formats. Many engage teaching artists to work directly with classroom teachers through modeling, collaborating, and/or mentoring. Some provide intensive workshops ranging from half a day to one week. Teachers may receive feedback on their arts or arts-integrated classroom instruction from teaching artists or participate in structured reflection for the purpose of improving their own instruction. In addition, a number of these programs provide instruction for their teaching artists. Some programs also provide teachers or teaching artists access to professional development offered outside the program.

Most grantees engage in some form of curriculum development and reported addressing the state arts learning standards, as well as standards in other content areas if the program is integrated across disciplines. Some work directly with school or district personnel to ensure state arts learning standards are understood and that curricula, lessons, and assessments are aligned. Some grantees have provided workshops on assessment for teachers or their teaching artists.

Many coordinators reported high levels of buy-in from district staff members and school leaders. In some instances, the support was evident from the beginning of the program, but this was not true in all cases. One person said, “There is full support from the administration. They’re embracing it after period of pushback, especially after seeing the project is keeping up with standards and teacher training.” Another observed, “There are district arts education goals, and they [district staff] see how the program aligns with and complements those, how it acts as a catalyst for those goals, and how it helps the district meet state and national arts education standards.” Demonstrating this buy-in, school leaders have provided planning and instructional time for these programs in their schools. “We do a lot of integration, and they [school leaders] get that it takes time. They make the time and know they need to plan for it,” observed a program coordinator. Some districts have provided grantees access to district-wide meetings to discuss the programs or incorporated the teacher training component into their professional development.

In some areas, the arts learning provided through the Community Consortium Grant represents the full extent of arts instruction students receive in their school. In other cases, it enhances existing instruction or integrates the arts into core disciplines to strengthen student understanding of shared concepts or build student engagement. Students visit museums and galleries, attend performances, and meet professional artists. Some grantees provide learning materials for teachers to use in the classroom to extend the learning of these field activities. For example, grantees may provide science or local history lessons to augment a concert or museum visit. Grantees value the ArtsWA emphasis on community and seek local events, museums, and performances that reflect their community’s history and artisans. They believe it is easier for students to find relevance in these local activities, as they are “an extension of their [students’] own lives.” According to grantees, field activities, such as attending a concert or visiting a

museum, may be first-time experiences for many students. For some, it may be once in a lifetime.

GRANT PROGRAM IMPACT

A salient characteristic of the Community Consortium Grant program is the diversity of the grantees. Grantee organizations are large and small, rural and urban, new and established, stand-alone and embedded in systems. They run the gamut in terms of the arts, addressing various forms of visual and performing arts. Grade levels range from Pre-K to 12, and there is a wide range of program objectives and implementation formats. Through this diversity, ArtsWA broadly impacts arts education across the state and has the opportunity to observe a variety of approaches to arts education and a range of implementation models. Grantees appreciate the ability to tailor their programs to the needs of their schools and communities and to maximize local involvement. One person commented, “This grant allows us to be autonomous and create a model that works for us.”

This diversity presents a challenge in evaluating the effectiveness of the grant program as a whole. Grantee target outcomes determine the type of data they collect, and target outcomes are program-specific. Thus, there are no common measures in use across grantees. Further, the diversity of data collection methods across grantees limits the utility of aggregating data or conducting a statistical meta-analysis. In this context, then, it is necessary to rely on reports from program coordinators and partners to determine grant program impact on partnerships, grantee assessment and program evaluation methods, learning for students and educators, sustainability, and knowledge-sharing.

Evaluation Question 5: To what extent do grantees establish effective partnerships?

ArtsWA designed the Community Consortia grant program in alignment with research on arts education and community arts engagement. Based on this research, the Community Consortium partnerships are intended to be authentic. Ideally, the partners collaboratively plan, develop, implement, and evaluate the project. Grantees reported benefiting from the latitude in project and grant design. Specifically, it has allowed them to tailor their projects and partnerships in accordance with the local needs and existing resources of the local community. Many indicated this flexibility has been central to the success of their program. All grantees reported growth in the number and/or quality of partners through the grant.

Grantees of established partnerships found the grant provided a common focus for their work, as well as expectations for collaboration. The grant prompted some to formalize the partnership through contracts, memoranda of understanding, or regularly scheduled meetings. For newer partnerships, the grant provided impetus to develop and deepen collaborative relationships.

To enhance collaboration, some consortia have established oversight or advisory groups with representatives of the partners. These groups may also include ad hoc community members, parents, or students. The function of these groups varies. They may have an advisory role or may be directly responsible for project planning and implementation. Other tasks include developing

and writing the Community Consortium grant proposals and annual reports, creating growth and sustainability plans, ensuring partners are not duplicating efforts, and evaluating the programs.

Partnership meetings occur in person and in phone or video conferences, with the latter particularly important in rural partnerships covering wide geographical areas. Partners work together to plan and implement their programs, design curricula, access performances and exhibitions, provide instruction to teachers or students, obtain resources, provide feedback, and review program progress. Partners may meet a few times a year or multiple times a month. The frequency of meetings depends on the complexity of the project, the phase of project implementation, and the stage of development of the partnership. For most grantees, the frequency of partner meetings has decreased over time. One person said, “The process has changed. At the beginning, the key partners had almost monthly meetings, then maybe every two months, then less frequently. In the beginning, we wanted to know what everybody wanted and the direction we would take. It’s been very collaborative, and as it grew, there were more key players. It’s a collaborative process: not fully formalized, but effective.”

Each interviewee expressed the fundamental importance of the consortia model to their project and goals. In each case, partners expand the outreach of the grantee organization and the breadth and depth of the project. More importantly, perhaps, is enrichment of knowledge and expertise. In some partnerships, the missions and the target populations overlap. Where this is effectively managed, the work of the organizations remains distinct but in alignment, allowing each partner to increase their impact through shared expertise, knowledge, and efforts.

Over time, a number of partnerships and projects have grown in scope, scaling up from a single grade band or school to entire schools or districts. This has permitted an economy of scale for the grantee while also increasing program access to greater numbers of students and educators. One cultural partner commented on the benefits of this saying, “Before, the partnership was with individual schools, and now has filtered upwards to the district as a high level planning partner... We can look at district needs, not just school needs, but the district needs as a whole.”

All grantees noted the importance of collaborative planning and implementation with schools. These processes take time to develop, and the relationships with schools and program integration are more established in organizations and grantees with longer histories. Each of these grantees described an evolution over time that has resulted in a deeper focus on student learning. One program coordinator said, “The partnership is driven through collaboration of the [school] district administration, teachers, students, artist educators, parents, and the community. The partnership will continue to evolve with the focus on student learning in the arts within the district.” Grantee organizations that exist outside school systems have used considerable initiative to access schools and to provide programs that will benefit and interest schools and districts. All grantees stressed the importance of understanding how schools and school systems operate in order to develop programs that fit into the existing frameworks. One grantee noted, “This is our strategy: we take it on ourselves to understand the systems, and there are many.”

Grantees directly seek input, collaboration, and feedback from school and district staffs to ensure program formats and curricula meet their needs. These efforts occur prior to grant submission, during program planning and implementation, and after the program has concluded. One person

said, “For the upcoming [ArtsWA] grant submission, we’re asking a lot of people if they’re interested and getting feedback. This time, we went to every single administrator to ask if they were interested in continuing. We also went to the museum and donors and asked if they wanted to continue and made a collective decision to continue.”

Grantees attend school staff meetings, teacher training days, and Parent Teacher Association [PTA] meetings, spending time in the schools and interacting with the staff. Some programs hold weekly meetings with their program staff and classroom teachers. Teaching artists are integral to these efforts. “The teaching artist has to hear what the classroom teacher wants, for it to be a successful residency,” observed one grantee. In one project, building representatives meet monthly with project personnel to provide input. The program coordinator described this saying, “Our large goal is to find out what our teachers need and want, bring it to them in the highest quality possible, and make it sustainable. It’s teacher-driven, and the group has guided what we do.” Program staff have learned that schools are more likely to adopt projects and curricula that align with learning standards. Over time, they have established collaborative processes for developing curricula that include various stakeholders, such as teachers, artists, teaching artists, and program staff. Other grantees have annual school-level planning meetings that may include school leaders, teachers involved with the project, teaching artists, district staff, parents or PTA representatives. Many grantees commented on the pivotal role of principals in the success of the program. One commented, “The principal really shapes the climate and how the school receives the teaching artist.”

In a few notable cases, grantees have coordinated their programs with other residencies or arts programs offered to the same students they serve. This coordination allows each program to share goals, minimizing redundancy and reinforcing shared learning. Where this occurs, programs seek to be catalytic and maximize the learning for students and teachers. In one example, students participate in 14 sessions through a writing program offered by another organization before they participate in the grantee’s program. Staff members from both programs meet prior to the school year to discuss instructional approaches and the connections between the programs. This enables the writing program to incorporate learning concepts of the grantee’s program, so students have prior exposure to them. In addition, they make plans for students to use their writing products in the grantee’s program. Staff members from both programs also overlap in the classroom on critical days, such as during students’ presentations or performances.

When grantees and partners were asked what made their partnerships effective, several themes emerged. Reflecting the responses of many, one person simply said, “Collaboration is key!” A number of people commented very specifically on the characteristics of the individuals involved, particularly the program director. Key characteristics included commitment, expertise, well-developed professional networks, and advocacy skills. Effectiveness also depends on the consistency and stability of the grantee and partner organizations and the school staffs. Many people said that they have high levels of communication and collaboration over time due to long-standing relationships between organizations and individuals.

Challenges to effective partnerships include staff turnover in any of the participating organizations or schools. Some grantees have had difficulty developing relationships with principals, particularly where there is significant pressure for school leaders to increase

achievement scores. Practical matters also have affected the ease of collaboration among partnerships, such as travel distances for rural consortia.

Finally, a noteworthy result of this grant program is the growth of networks among grantee partners in some localities. As consortia come together to plan and collaborate, there has been a ripple effect of partners developing their own relationships. Some commented that this has notably reinforced the community's informal infrastructure in the arts, albeit behind the scenes. One partner said, "[The grantee] is pulling together all of these arts organizations. This is a big part of it for me, knowing these other organizations." Partners also reported benefiting from exposure to professional development intended for teachers. One partner said, "I like that they have district staff, literacy coaches, and professional development staff involved [in teacher workshops]. These are such good resources that trickle down into our work. The professional development is for all of us in the room, not just the classroom teachers. We hear what the teachers hear and learn how to improve our own program."

It is the intention of the granting program that members of the partnerships collaboratively plan, develop, implement, and evaluate their project. Taken together, the information obtained from grantees and key partners indicates the partnerships take different shapes, uniquely disburse responsibilities, and are influenced by a number of factors, particularly the size and type of each organization, the nature of the program, the locality, and the number of years the partnership has been in place. The information also suggests the large majority of partnerships have established collaborative practices, with only a few of the newer or smaller organizations reporting their interactions with partners are primarily informal or unstructured. Further, where the partnerships are firmly established, grantees and partners alike reported mutual investment and benefit.

Evaluation Question 6: To what extent do grantees use assessment and evaluation methods to monitor and improve their programs?

Grant leaders have encouraged and supported program evaluation among grantees, providing professional development in evaluation practices and requiring annual reports. All program coordinators described evaluation activities, although those practices vary considerably in the type of data collected and the strategies used for program improvement. Most coordinators reported their evaluation strategies are still under development but also indicated that participation in the grant program has facilitated this. In one case, a program evaluation consultant works with teachers and teaching artists on assessment planning and meets with the teaching artists and project staff after the program runs to review results and revise the program. The grant program's focus on evaluation has been particularly beneficial to newer programs and to program personnel unfamiliar with evaluation practices. One said, "The grant has helped ensure that we have evaluation for everything: our professional development, our teaching artists, our teachers. We use the [final report] questions and review the results [with our advisory team]."

Across the cohort, grantees collect data on program implementation, participant satisfaction, and student and teacher learning, gathering data from students, teachers, teaching artists, school leaders, school district personnel, audiences, partners, and community members. Several factors influence the extent and type of data collected. These factors are related to the structure of the

program, the nature of the grantee organization, the program development, and available resources. Table 3 provides key examples of these factors.

Table 3.
Factors Influencing Type of Data Collected

Factor	Examples
Grantee Organization	Nature of organization (education, arts, other) Access to data collection processes and analyses
Program Structure	Program objectives Program implementation (length, frequency) Grade level Content area
Stage of Program Development	Clear and established objectives Specified target outcomes Data collection mechanisms Program improvement feedback loop
Resources	Expertise in data collection, analysis, evaluation Financial support Personnel hours

Grantees collect data to understand the impact of their programs and to guide program improvement. The data generally fall into two categories: program-level feedback data and learning or growth outcomes data for students, teachers, or teaching artists. Table 4 provides a summary of common data collection sources and formats reported by grantees.

Table 4.
Data Collection Sources and Formats

Source	Purpose	Format
Teacher	Outcomes Program feedback	Survey Journal Personal reflection or self-evaluation Feedback from teaching artists
Student	Outcomes Program feedback	Lesson-specific skill or content assessment Pre/post skill or content assessment Performance-based assessment Review of literacy samples Art class grade Evaluation from teacher or teaching artist (narrative, rubric, observation) Student reflection/self-evaluation of learning, product, or performance (narrative, rubric; in groups or individually) Attendance record Outcomes beyond the program (student acceptance into advanced arts programs or companies; student awards or scholarships)
Teaching Artists	Program feedback <i>Some outcomes</i>	Survey Evaluation form
Building Administrators	Program feedback	Survey Evaluation form
Other stakeholders	Program feedback	Parent survey Audience survey

Grantees generally obtain program-level feedback through evaluation forms, reflections, or questionnaires completed by students, teachers, teaching artists, school administrators, parents, event attendees, and other stakeholders. In reference to feedback forms completed by principals three times a year, one person commented, “The reflection process makes them take the time to think about the program and its impacts. The feedback is always good and includes suggestions for improvement.” Another said, “We learned that assessment is important to the teachers, according to the survey. They want something measurable.” The process of collecting feedback data also has the side benefit of drawing attention to the program and allowing grantees to respond directly to various stakeholders.

Grantees find program-level feedback data easy to collect, compile, and interpret, and they actively use this data to modify their programs. Similar to many comments, one person said, “We’re using the feedback for our grant reports and for our own program evaluation to see if we are doing what we wanted to do with it and what we might need to change.” This process is often unstructured and fairly informal, with program leaders and other participants reviewing the feedback and making suggestions for changes. A few described more structured processes, such as having the data summarized and presented to program staff by a consultant. Some grantees share the data and the changes made in response to the feedback with stakeholders. Common

changes made in response to feedback included modifying curricula and assessments, increasing integration of learning standards, improving implementation logistics, and shifting the timing, length, or target population of the program.

The majority of grantees also use at least one measure to monitor learning or growth of students or teachers. Many project leaders reported greater incorporation of student learning assessments into program curricula, as their programs developed over time. A few grantees with target outcomes related to core content areas, such as math or reading, reported collecting achievement or other content assessment data. Other assessments of student learning include student peer- or self-evaluation and observations by teachers or teaching artists. A number use student or teacher rubrics to evaluate art skills, art products, or learning processes. One program coordinator gave an example of student reflection: “They will have kids talk about whether that [their art product] worked and how did that message get communicated. Kids assess other kids in small groups and assess each other with a rubric.” A minority of programs systematically collect student data pertaining to learning frameworks or complex skills or behaviors, such as 21st Century learning skills. One program coordinator said, “We do retrospective [assessment] on attitudes and behaviors around five major components of what we hope students walk away with.” Some programs also regularly assess teacher learning or teaching artists. These assessments are typically based on personal reflection, but a few use structured formats such as observation rubrics.

Compared to the program feedback data, grantees find it more difficult to use student outcomes data for program evaluation and improvement. Data must be compiled, analyzed, and interpreted, and some programs lack the necessary time or expertise. Grantees also cited disconnects between their original target outcomes and their assessment tools, leading to collection of “the wrong data.” In some cases, administration of assessments has been inconsistent. A few use advanced procedures, such as codifying student reflections or pre/post growth measures, but this is the exception rather than the rule. The majority of grantees said they would benefit from assistance in developing and implementing measures and in using the data. One said, “We want more measurable outcomes, more focus on learning, especially tied to standards, and not more reaction to performances [they attend].” One person said, “I know we can do more in gathering and analyzing how well a kid is matching the expectations of the learning outcomes.” A number said they want to clearly demonstrate growth, which requires pre/post assessment or a comparison group, but they were aware this increases the complexity of data collection and analysis.

Grantees value the information and professional development on program evaluation they have received from ArtsWA through the grant program, noting specific improvements they have made as a result. A number revised or developed assessments in alignment with the evaluation and assessment practices they learned. One program coordinator commented, “That was transformative for our process.” Some grantees provided workshops for teachers and teaching artists on developing clear objectives and assessment tools to determine if program learning goals are met. One said, “This year, we all got together to reflect on what happened last year, and what we want to have happen coming up – the big ideas, the thrust of the program, the schedule – and this year there was also some training. All of the arts organizations and teaching artists were trained in formative assessments and charged with revising their formative assessments.”

In addition to program-level feedback data and outcomes data, grantees cited other evidence to demonstrate program implementation and impact. A number of programs created compilations of student work or documentation of program activities in electronic or booklet form. They also cited the program curricula they developed, many of which included cross-walks between the curricula and learning standards. Grantees also commonly use events and products to demonstrate student learning and outcomes to schools, districts, and the larger community, holding public exhibitions and performances, school art nights, and community events. Some include the relevant lesson criteria or learning standards to underscore the nature of the learning. Finally, some grantees pointed to requests for their program or services from teachers, schools, or districts as evidence of impact.

The ArtsWA interest in outcomes has encouraged teachers and teaching artists to develop strategies for monitoring student progress. Across programs, grantees designed, revised, and implemented student assessments. The more advanced levels of implementation include periodic assessments that are formative, performance-based, or standards-based. One person described their system: “There are formative assessment checkpoints, so each criterion and objective would be checked at some point during instruction.” Teachers in some programs have received training in assessments and formative techniques. A program coordinator said, “[The ArtsWA grant leader] is very mindful of what’s happening in arts education. It is part of the process that the questions [pertaining to objectives and evaluation] are always there, and now they are providing learning opportunities for people to do that...there is an expectation: what are your objectives and outcomes? How are you going to know that?”

Overall, each grantee reported conducting some level of assessment and program evaluation. Information obtained through this evaluation of the grant program indicates that data collection practices, as well as strategies for ongoing program improvement, differ widely. In addition, most grantees reported their program evaluation efforts are still under development. They value the grant program’s efforts to build their capacity for program evaluation and noted areas in which they would like further assistance, including aligning measures to their goals, assessing learning skills, and using data effectively for program improvement.

Evaluation Question 7: To what extent does arts learning improve for K-12 students and educators?

Although grantees of the Community Consortium Grant program collect qualitative and quantitative data, the diversity of the data prevents aggregation across programs. However, grantees and partners reported salient qualitative and quantitative findings reflecting the impact of their programs on students, teachers, teaching artists, school and district personnel, schools and school districts. In addition to these findings, these grants have had an impact on local communities and on the grantees, themselves, which further fosters arts learning.

Students. For this evaluation, evidence of student impact was obtained through reports from program coordinators and partner representatives. Their evidence included examples of quantitative data, reports from school personnel and teaching artists, and personal observations. The evidence falls into four main categories: arts learning and engagement, learning in other content areas, development of learning skills, and personal development.

All grantees reported significant student learning in the arts. Examples of quantitative evidence across several grantees included 85% of students meeting criteria on an arts rubric, 98% of students showing improvement on pre/post arts assessments, and 92% of students meeting criteria on an observation instrument. Qualitative data includes evidence of student understanding arts concepts and principles on reflections and narrative responses and improved arts skills on projects. Finally, some grantees offered evidence of students pursuing the arts beyond their program, through civic arts projects and further pursuit of arts opportunities.

A number of grantee programs integrate arts learning with other content areas. Such programs are naturally interested in student outcomes in those content areas, and a few reported assessment outcomes that demonstrate the impact of their programs. For example, one program coordinator reported increased performance on pre/post math tests, with mastery rates increasing from 3% to 81%. According to grantees, teachers have reported improvements in students' abilities to meet learning standards, as indicated by test performance in math, reading, writing, research, and public speaking. One person noted, "There is evidence on pre/post tests... They are learning how to observe [in the art program], and their science observations and documentation are improving." Another said, "With students, when doing integration, they make comments like 'I get it. I see why I have to learn geometry. I'm going to have to use it.'"

A large number of grantees reported growth in student learning skills that go beyond content-specific learning. For example, one person said, "It's the outcome of these students having the ability to be creative and share their ideas with each other and an audience, being aware of their own creative process, able to collaborate, and able to share their ideas." Another commented, "The program bolsters other key learning skills, individual development, habits of mind, and 21st century learning skills." On the basis of similar observations, one grantee expanded their arts programming at the early learning level, noting teachers' interest in an early start on foundational learning skills. A teacher in the early learning program observed, "[The grantee's program] encourages and develops attention to detail, the deliberate organization of observations, and storage and recall of observations when comparing or reproducing art works. It has been shown to be highly motivating, especially with sometimes otherwise at risk students..."

While evidence of these positive outcomes pertaining to growth in general learning skills is typically anecdotal in nature, a few programs have monitored growth on instruments that assess these skills. For example, one reported improvement on an instrument that assesses students' research and synthesis skills.

Grantee reports also suggest these programs may be effective in engaging students who are less invested in school or who struggle with academic content and traditional instruction. One person said, "Teachers come up after [the lesson] and point out one particular student, saying 'This student was not engaged [in regular lessons], but I saw them light up when doing this project.'" Another noted, "Many learning disabled students excel in the visual and performing arts. For students who are very creative, but maybe not academically strong, it helps with behavior. They're more willing to risk in their learning."

The majority of grantees also reported positive evidence related to students' personal development, attitudes, or behavior through participation in these art programs. Increased confidence and ability to speak in front of an audience were frequently cited by coordinators of programs that include performing arts. The practice of art and experimentation have helped students tap into their own creativity, take risks, learn to express their ideas, and develop autonomy. One person commented, "Kids have grown in confidence... Making connections with their art has been profound." Another offered, "There's no right and wrong, and I've heard them say, 'I love having the chance to do this my way, to make my own rules.'" Students have also developed skills as audience members or museum observers. This includes appropriate behavior in these settings, observation skills, and finding connections between what they observe and their own lives or learning. Attitudinal and behavioral data collected from one program over the past three years has shown increased confidence in public speaking and increased affinity for analyzing literature and poetry. A number of grantees were interested in measuring developmental skills or changes in attitude through participation in these programs, but were unaware of relevant instruments or strategies.

Teachers. According to grantees, teachers have reported greater understanding of arts learning standards, arts vocabulary and concepts, and the intersections between the arts and other content areas. This is important because, as noted by ArtsWA staff, teachers are required to teach these concepts but often lack the training. This can be particularly true for elementary teachers, who are expected to be generalists. A number of program coordinators and partners also reported improvement in classroom instruction of participating teachers. One program has documented these improvements on two different structured instruments that assess classroom instruction. According to several grantees, these improvements generalize to teaching outside the lessons of these programs. One offered the following example: "Classroom management changes through this type of learning. There are rituals that go into integrated learning experiences in the classroom. You have to be organized in moving kids through space and time efficiently, as part of their collaboration. Our classroom management techniques are so tight that we can be successful, and teachers start using these techniques on a daily basis.... The things we are doing in art classrooms are just good practice."

Many grantees believe teachers learn more about the learning needs of individual students by observing or participating in arts instruction. One person said, "It's amazing to see teachers change their practice; to see a kid in a whole new light, saying 'I want to make my classroom more like this when you're not here.'" Another commented, "Teachers talk about how much their teaching expertise has expanded because of working with an artist; how they understand the learning styles of kids better, because they see them in a different light, rather than just paper and pencil activities. It brings out different sides of kids, and teachers can then devise teaching strategies that support the different learning styles of kids."

Assessments developed through these programs are often performance-based, and in several programs they have been developed through collaboration among project staff and teachers. Through this, teachers have learned new assessment techniques, as well as the importance of tying assessments to target outcomes. One program coordinator said, "The focus of assessment is student learning goals and objectives. Teachers answer, what do I want my students to know and be able to do? What does that look like?"

By working with artists and teachers trained in assessment, ArtsWA grantees and teachers in the programs have been exposed to research-based assessment strategies and the process of connecting outcomes assessment to program objectives. Some grantees reported that teachers have applied this learning to other arts lessons as well as other content areas. One person said, “[Our partner] was having a hard time with the language for objectives. A lot of times, when a teacher is planning a unit, they talk generally and not about the specific criteria... Assessment criteria is there, but super broad. This time, [we worked on] where there were actually going to see that [criterion], and the assessment became tightly connected to what was happening in the instruction.” One program coordinator commented, “It’s exciting to me. I feel there is a shift happening, from ‘We have to do assessment for the funders’ to ‘If I want to do some really great teaching, I have to do this.’” This type of teacher learning is relevant beyond the programs of this grant.

Teaching Artists. Through professional development and working directly with teachers and district staff, teaching artists have deepened their understanding of state standards in the arts, as well as standards from other content areas integrated with the arts curricula. They also learned instructional techniques and approaches to student evaluation and outcomes assessment.

School and District Leaders. Grantees offered anecdotal evidence of impact by the support and interest school and district leaders give their programs. They visit classrooms and verbally support their programs. One noted, “Administrators are aware of the importance of it. They do a big advocacy piece, and ask what else can we do?” Some also reported positive responses on program evaluation forms.

School and School District Systems. These grants have affected schools and school systems. Grantees and partners report greater awareness of and alignment with state arts standards. Some also reported strengthened vertical alignment and feeder paths, where programs cover consecutive grade bands. A common language around arts instruction has developed in some schools. Grantees and partners from schools or districts also reported greater parent engagement and support because of student exhibits or performances. One commented, “We’re getting more parent involvement, which is the number one indicator for [student] achievement.” Some districts have adopted arts curricula or arts texts, or added arts programs and staff, after seeing the effects of the programs or in response to requests from teachers or parents. One person stated, “It contributes to the well-being of the culture in the school.” A program coordinator commented, “Where we have been for 15 years, you can really see and feel the difference. We have a whole cohort of schools that have been with us for 5 years, and we’re watching them transform.”

Some schools and districts have restored arts programs or staff positions that were cut or added new ones. Where this has supplanted grantee programs, grantees have adapted to new roles. For example, one grantee said, “The district did what we hoped they would do: hired arts specialists and built all the programs up – visual art, theatre, music, and dance – but we maintained the artists in the schools and it continues to this day to help teachers innovate and think more broadly, and to integrate into other areas.”

Communities. Grantees have actively cultivated community awareness of and interest in these programs, and the impact of these efforts are evident in community support. One commented, “There is continued and growing support within the community and school district. There is continued belief in us - the belief that we are doing the right thing through the curriculum work, the assessments, teacher training, and the overall quality of the work.” Other evidence of awareness comes through editorials and articles in local papers. Several programs have directly impacted their local community, primarily through events. For example, student exhibitions or performances in small towns bring the community together. One person said, “The community is coming to value this. We’re involving them through art - people that would have no other connection to the school.” In one town for example, a local farmer with no children in the schools taught contra dancing at a community-wide event that grew out of one project’s integration of cultural history and the arts. These programs provide avenues for youth to participate in their community in positive ways, such as creating a mural with an artist, wearing masks they made in a parade, or creating a memorial for a beloved teacher. Reflecting on the effects of the project on the community, one grantee said, “Our town has definitely changed. It’s a happier place.”

Grantees. Grantees have developed considerable expertise in specific areas through these grants. Program coordinators and partners are more familiar with school systems, education frameworks, learning standards, and program evaluation methods, and this awareness enables them to adjust their programs to the needs of students and educators. They consult education research more frequently for program design and advocacy. They also report they are better at communicating with parents and teachers.

For a number of grantees, the Community Consortium Grant funding has supported program expansion to other sites or deepened implementation at existing sites. Several reported the funding allowed them to experiment with innovative curricula, try new learning activities, or work with different age groups. Most organizations also leverage ArtsWA funding to procure additional interest and funding from other stakeholders.

A number of program coordinators mentioned the value of specific grant-related activities sponsored by ArtsWA, including developing grant applications, annual reports, and logic models. These activities required grantees to clarify program objectives, values, and outcomes. Particularly for newer organizations, these efforts enabled grantees to more authoritatively and confidently represent their program to stakeholders and potential supporters. Grantees also reported creating or acquiring evaluation and assessment procedures and tools through networking with other consortia or in response to information and resources obtained from ArtsWA. Grantees outside school systems reported increased understanding of state learning standards in the arts and core content areas, as well as stronger relationships with schools, districts, and educators. All grantees reported learning more about current approaches to arts instruction and curricula. Grantees also reported greater access to cultural and arts organizations.

Program coordinators also noted the general effects of ArtsWA support on implementation of their programs. ArtsWA resources are essential to the basic functioning of some organizations, and it augments organizational capacity in others by increasing staff hours and supporting organizational staff training. ArtsWA convenings provide professional development in program

implementation and program evaluation, and opportunities for networking and peer mentoring. This helps grantees identify goals and objectives, plan for program implementation and evaluation.

In addition to the impact on students, teachers, teaching artists, school and district personnel, schools and school districts, communities, and the grantees, program coordinators point to the existence of the programs, themselves, and their longevity as outcomes. For example, one noted, “Looking at students served, the number is remarkable: over 5000 students and for rural communities, that is high. There is 49% to 99% free or reduced lunch, so there is great need. These schools have no formal arts education at all. We are the only service that provides that.” Requests for expanded services also reflect positively on program impact. Participating teachers have asked for additional training, school districts have asked for assistance in teacher development, and educators at different levels have requested program implementation in their school or district. Finally, many of these programs have persisted through years of vacillations in funding and education priorities, remaining relevant by adapting to the shifting emphases and needs. This viability over time and through changing environments suggests the need is ongoing and the programs are valued.

In this evaluation, the findings pertaining to arts learning for K-12 students and educators show that each grantee has a unique approach to determining learning outcomes. This diversity is by design, as the intention of the grant program is to provide resources for programs as they directly respond to local education needs and build on local resources. Both grantees and partners valued this flexibility, saying it allows them to maximize the impact of the ArtsWA resources and to adjust to the changing needs and demands of the local educational system. This diversity means it will not be possible to aggregate learning data across grantees. However, most grantees reported gathering some type of data on learning outcomes and that these data show positive results. Given the scope of this evaluation, it is not possible to characterize that learning or verify those results. It may be beneficial to consider whether it would be useful to request examples of outcomes data in order to understand the types of learning occurring across these programs. This could include arts learning, learning in other content areas, and development of learning of skills (e.g. habits of mind, 21st century learning skills).

Evaluation Question 8: To what extent are grantees addressing sustainability of grant-supported activities?

In looking into the future, Community Consortium grantees considered two things: the capacity to maintain their current programs and the capacity to grow them. Almost every grantee spoke of the growth they envision for their program, such as expanding to other grade levels, schools, districts, or art forms. A number have been approached by individual teachers, schools, or districts with requests for their program. The visions of growth also pertained to developing deeper knowledge and greater expertise for their staff members and participants, creating additional materials, and improving curricula and assessments. One person defined sustainability as “the ability to continue to provide teacher training and integrated multicultural arts and technology programming for schools at several different grade levels, while being responsive to requests from new schools and teachers.” Another envisioned “a sequential visual arts program for all students [in the district] which aligns with the arts EALRs [Essential Academic Learning

Requirements], art GLEs [Grade Level Expectations], OSPI [Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction] standards, and art CBPAs [Classroom-Based Performance Assessments].”

Grantees face funding challenges, and most reported actively seeking additional external support. Some have been successful in using ArtsWA funding and evidence of their program’s progress to leverage additional financial support. One said, “Now, because the program is stronger, we have been able to reach out to other grantors. The Arts Commission seeded the program.” However, most indicated their programs remain highly dependent on continued ArtsWA funding. Reflecting the comments of others, one said, “I hope they continue to support the longstanding and successful grants. The arts are always going to have to be supported.” Several long-term grantees agreed with the approach of requiring additional expectations, such as knowledge-sharing, replication, or mentoring newer programs for continued and higher levels of funding.

Grantees are also considering the community in their sustainability plans. One reported, “We used the strategic planning process to create opportunities for stakeholder engagement through interviews, focus groups, and surveys.” Some programs are increasing their outreach efforts and nurturing new partnerships, particularly those with similar goals to maximize the benefits to all parties.

Grantees are using several specific strategies to increase the likelihood that teachers and schools can maintain the programs independently. One grantee said, “We’re providing more hands-on experiences so teachers can continue them.” Another program is considering establishing a memorandum of understanding, so the programs will persist regardless of staff turnover in the schools, district, or arts organization. Grantees also noted that the existing investment and direct involvement of the school district and local community will enhance sustainability.

On the whole, grantees were aware of the importance of sustainability planning. The extent to which sustainability plans are in place appears to be partly a function of current organizational capacity and resources. Where capacity and resources are stronger, sustainability plans tended to be more robust.

Evaluation Question 9: To what extent are grantees engaged in knowledge-sharing?

Grantees interpreted “knowledge-sharing” in two distinct ways: raising awareness of the project and sharing expertise by disseminating learning or materials associated with the projects. Grantees raise awareness through newsletters and newspaper articles circulate information about the programs. Student work is shared via public performances and exhibitions, compilations, and internet postings. A few grantees use social media, such as Facebook, to maintain a public presence. Grantees also share their expertise, the materials they have developed, and the knowledge they have gained. For example, grantees support curriculum development in schools by providing lesson plans and curricula and by aligning curricula to learning standards. Some make curricula or lesson plans publicly available through websites, which provides broad access to these materials to families and educators. Curricula and tools circulate among partners, and some grantees offer local or regional workshops. Grantees also reported sharing knowledge and

outcomes through forums focused on arts, culture, or education, as well as individual connections with other grantees or stakeholders.

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

Grantees discussed a number of factors that have supported or challenged the implementation and impact of their programs.

Several factors have supported grant implementation and impact. Grantees participating in the Community of Thinkers, a professional learning community for leaders in education and arts, cultural and community organizations, have benefited from their work on logic models, the common core standards, and lesson planning. Several grantees reported active public support from school and district leaders. This, in turn, tends to build parent interest and support as well as community engagement with their programs. District support has facilitated program implementation and expansion. In some schools, existing programs dovetail with grantee programs, enhancing the impact of the program and its viability in the school. Finally, publicity about the programs has raised community awareness. It has also increased the demand in some places.

A number of factors challenge these programs, however. While several programs have obtained additional funding that supports their program, the current economic climate has resulted in a general decline in external support. One grantee stated, “We’ve had a decrease in contributions from businesses and individuals. There are longer grant cycles with reduced funding ceilings and increased competition. Art teachers are cut from schools and school funding is lower.” It is worth noting, however, that a few grantees reported the funding limitations have forced them to focus on the main objectives and have made them more efficient. A number of program coordinators work well beyond the hours for which they are paid to work on these projects. One person observed, “There is low funding for some program coordinators, maybe as little as 12 hours a week, and a number go well beyond the allotment of hours. These hours must be considered in considering the resources and investment when looking at outcomes.”

Funding for the last Community Consortium Grant cycle was delayed, with funding available from January to June only. The reduced timeframe limited program implementation for some grantees and caused others to compress their work into fewer months.

Programs in rural communities face a unique set of conditions. Travel to remote communities increases the costs of programs and can limit the frequency of visits from teaching artists and the intensity of residencies. Access to cultural organizations, performance or exhibit venues, and community business or civic partners can be limited or absent. Locating teaching artists can also be difficult.

Grantees reported challenges to collaborations with schools and districts when staff turnover removes those committed to and trained in the program. In some cases, teachers reported being overcommitted or were reluctant to commit to the program in the face of pressures to raise achievement results in other areas, such as reading and math. The current focus on testing outcomes in these content areas has some schools and districts reluctant to adopt programs that

appear to distract staff or students from core content. Budget cuts in education also render school and district leaders reluctant to expend resources on programs outside these areas.

Changes in partnership involvement have occurred due to reductions in funding or staff, and some partner organizations or businesses have ceased to exist. Others have lost the funding they anticipated contributing to the program.

Finally, grantees reported the organizational context of their program affects implementation, impact, and their own viability. Those within larger organizations are subject to changes in status, changes in the mission of the parent organization, and competition within the organization. One person said, “They care about the program, but it’s a little bit of a side note. They don’t toot the horn of the program as much as they could.” On the other hand, these programs have access to resources and stability smaller or independent grantees may lack.

GRANTEE RESPONSE TO GRANT PROGRAM

In addition to providing information about their own programs, grantees were asked if they had recommendations for strengthening the overall grant program and its outcomes. It was telling that this question was often met with silence, followed by statements such as “You know, I really can’t think of anything that would make it better” and “Well, I’m at a loss, because it’s run really well.” Thus, instead of providing suggestions for improvement, most interviewees commented on the grant program’s strengths.

According to grantees, the grant program has encouraged them to continually evaluate their procedures, to maintain and develop new partners, and to evaluate programs and impact. The application and annual reporting processes contribute to this. One person observed, “Although the grant [application] process can be grueling, it sure helps the grantee focus on what the goals are, what your partnership needs to be, what your outcomes are.” Another commented, “I refer back to our narrative evaluation [annual report] all the time. We use it to communicate to others, to say, ‘This is what we need to be doing’ and to see if we had addressed what we had planned to. It helps us realize what we have accomplished.” Several grantees commented on the length of the grant cycle, suggesting a three-year cycle would enable longer-range planning. A grantee commented, “Knowing the funding is there can help with planning. Schools have to plan so far in advance, and it’s hard to approach a school when you don’t know for sure if the funding will happen. It would also allow us to leverage the funding better.” Grantees also reflected specifically on the convenings, advocacy efforts, and grant leadership.

Convenings. The majority of program coordinators and partners stressed the importance of the annual grantee convenings. They value the opportunity to confer with each other, and some grantees have developed relationships beyond the annual meetings. Those in rural areas find this particularly important. Through conversations with other program coordinators and partners, grantees obtain feedback on their programs and gather ideas for improvement.

Program coordinators and partners also value the content presented. Many commented specifically on the most recent convening, which addressed program evaluation and advocacy, saying, “It was our best” and “I was so impressed with this last convening.” Another noted,

“[The leader] did a great overview of the theme of program evaluation at the convening - the purpose and the outcomes, how different strategies work to determine progress and effectiveness. She talked about assessment of student learning. I learned a lot from her presentation. It was actually the best part of the day.” Many grantees also benefited from the advocacy segment of the recent convening. One participant said, “I loved the fact that [the leader] said we should share our work with the government officials and how to do that, how to make our work visible, how to keep it visible. All of us should be our own advocates.” The results of a participant survey, administered by ArtsWA, reflecting on this convening showed positive results. On the survey, 91.4% to 100% of the participants indicated “agree” or “strongly agree” with five statements reflecting their experience of the meeting, and 100% indicated “agree” or “strongly agree” on two statements reflecting overall satisfaction with and relevance of the convening.

Since each partnership includes participants outside the school system, it is not surprising that grantees and partners have valued opportunities to learn about schools, instruction, and learning standards. One person said, “The big topic for me is knowing the challenges the schools are facing, understanding the buzzwords, and what’s going on in the classroom, as well as the expectations for classroom teachers so you know what their context is, because it really is our mission to help them be better teachers and give them tools in the classroom to help them help more kids...”

Grantees offered several suggestions regarding convenings. Several suggested additional meetings throughout the year. One said, “The convening is really, really helpful. It would be helpful to have more meetings like that in a year. Geographically, it’s a pain, but maybe there could be a convening on the east side [of the mountains], and more than one.” Other suggestions included online convenings, phone conferences, and workshops during the year that focus on specific content in greater depth, such as evaluation strategies, an aspect of program implementation, or a relevant article or book. Many grantees would like opportunities to delve into specifics, such as recommendations for gathering key outcomes data, maximizing the effectiveness of program advisory groups, using social media, or developing specific advocacy strategies.

Grantees also suggested convenings that focus on planning and on the characteristics of strong partnerships would be better earlier in the grant cycle. One said, “The planning sessions we had when came together in the second year: in retrospect, I wish it would happen at the beginning of the two-year cycle. . .It would be great to have it at the beginning of the grant cycle, to talk about what makes a good partnership, etc.” Finally, grantees noted that the convening needs of newer grantees and younger organizations differ from those of more established organizations, but they did not have a suggestions for how to adequately address these differences.

Advocacy. Grantees praised the advocacy efforts of the ArtsWA staff, believing “they’ve made a lot of strides and in-roads.” Following the focus on advocacy at the recent convening, a number began to explore advocacy pathways in their local communities and were planning to invite local officials and stakeholders to grant events. Many were also considering their role in state-level advocacy efforts. One said, “We understand the value of the contribution they [ArtsWA] are making, and I wonder how we can communicate the value of that. We always list our funders,

and the principals really know about it, but I don't know if they really understand that this is public money that funds it.”

Grantee suggestions for advocacy at the state and local levels included having students and families participate through letter writing or speaking directly with legislators. One grantee suggested, “Invite legislators to observe classes or sessions or have us [grantees] go out to meet with legislators to tell a little about our program. The diversity [of the grant program] is a strength, so we could go with other grantees to represent the program.” Others suggested grantees support ArtsWA advocacy efforts by inviting legislators to convenings or by meeting ArtsWA staff and board members to deepen understanding of grant programs and outcomes. The importance of this, according to one person is that, “It's about the sharing. It's about the ‘why.’ We are all passionate and excited about what we are doing.”

Grant leadership. Grantees described grant leadership as strong and effective. Reflecting on the funding uncertainties of the previous year, one person said, “We have gone through some really difficult times. This last cycle, everybody thought ‘This is it.’ I feel like we stayed strong and helped people move on. We're proud of [the leadership] for hanging in there. It's tough economic times, and they're doing a good job.” Another said, “Even with all the turmoil, the Education Granting Office has been so organized and so responsive - really well run. They have bent over backwards to get information to us in a timely manner.” Grantees believe the leadership communicates effectively and listens to and addresses their questions and feedback. One person said, “[The leadership] is great – super smart, understands everybody's working very hard, and they all have the same passion. They're great at getting data and making it easy for us to understand...very easy to work with, good with communication, and want real feedback.” Another offered, “They are super accessible and stay in touch with us.”

Summary of Evaluation Results

The purpose of this evaluation was to determine the effectiveness of the Community Consortium Grant program, particularly in terms of the two key outcome areas identified by ArtsWA: the impact on arts learning for K-12 students and educators and the authenticity of collaboration among consortium partners. The evaluation focused on the implementation and impact of the grants on arts learning and partnerships for the current 19 grantees. It also considered the public value of the Community Consortium Grant program.

Grantee program implementation. Evaluation results suggest grant implementation levels are high for the FY 2012 grantee cohort. Most grantees and partners reported meeting implementation goals for FY 2012, in spite of a variety of challenges, and a few reported exceeding target numbers of students or educators served by their program. All grantees maintained their consortia, making adjustments if changes occurred for partners or in school program needs. All grantees carried out plans to improve arts learning for students and educators. They provided curricula and student assessments, instruction in arts and integrated learning, opportunities for field experiences, and professional development for classroom teachers.

Grantee program impact. Grantees reported positive impact from these grant-funded programs. According to interviewees, grantees established effective and authentic partnerships in a manner consistent with the stage of consortium development. Long-term partnerships continued to meet, carry out the tasks essential to implementation, and revise their programs. Newer partnerships developed roles and processes for collaboration, albeit sometimes more informally. Each partnership appeared to involve authentic collaborative planning and implementation between the grantee and at least one partner. Grantees also collected data to obtain program feedback and to monitor program outcomes. However, data collection methods vary widely across the 19 programs. Further, most find program feedback data easier to interpret and use than outcomes data. Grantees are interested in developing skills and methods for gathering and using outcomes data. In the absence of consistent outcomes data, grant impact on arts learning must be inferred from grantee reports.

Grantees provided qualitative reports of benefits to students, teachers, and teaching artists, based on reports from school personnel, teaching artists, personal observations, and a few examples of assessment outcomes. Schools, districts, and their personnel also experienced positive outcomes, such as increased parent involvement and restored arts programs or staff positions. Communities have engaged with the schools through arts programs, which have, in turn, drawn the community together. Finally, grantees also reported significant organizational impact, such as greater familiarity with education systems and frameworks, implementation of program evaluation methods, and increased organizational capacity. A number have received requests to expand their services. Knowledge-sharing occurs primarily through sharing curricula, lessons, and assessment with schools and other partners. The majority of grantees are considering pathways to sustainability, and a few have taken clear steps toward ensuring sustainability. However, most said they are dependent on ArtsWA funding for continued implementation of their program as it now exists. Taken together, reports from grantees and partners suggest positive outcomes in most areas of interest to ArtsWA, with less evidence in the areas of sustainability and knowledge-sharing.

Grant program public value. In addition to understanding the extent of implementation and impact of grantee programs, ArtsWA is interested in understanding the public value of the Community Consortium Grant program. If public value is defined as benefits to the public education system, to the children in community schools, and to communities, a number of examples can be cited.

First, these programs support educators, schools, and districts in understanding and using state arts learning standards. A number also support assessment of those standards and have provided expertise to schools or districts in developing assessments. Several programs provide interdisciplinary content or instruction, which can reinforce concepts and integrate understanding. Grantees and partners also provide opportunities for teachers to improve their practices through professional development, mentoring, and self evaluation or structured reflection. In addition to lessons and assessments aligned with arts learning standards, grantees reported direct benefits to students including opportunities to develop 21st century learning skills, which are considered foundational to long-term learning and development. Many also reported higher levels of student engagement in learning, as well as shifts in teacher understanding of individual student capacities by observing them in different learning modes.

Second, grantees reported benefits to their communities as learning extended beyond school walls. Communities benefit when the organizations that serve them are effective and when the important stakeholders engage more authentically in education. A number of programs reported increased parent engagement and community involvement in the schools through events featuring student exhibitions and performances or other program activities. Grantees also noted that the grant program requirements for increased accountability and commitment to intentional program goals has raised the bar for their organizations and their programs. Further, they reported greater community stakeholder engagement in education, as well as increased dialogue about education within some communities. Opportunities for public-private funding partnerships to support learning have also benefited the communities and the organizations.

Recommendations

On the basis of these evaluation results, the following recommendations are offered. While some may require additional resources, they will enable ArtsWA to maximize and document the existing investment of the Community Consortium Partnership Grant program.

Grantee program evaluation. ArtsWA has communicated the importance of program evaluation through grant application forms, annual reports, and convenings. Each grantee is interested in collecting qualitative or quantitative data they can use to guide changes in their program and to demonstrate program effectiveness. A minority of the grantees believe they effectively use the evaluation and assessment results for program improvement. More frequently, grantees reported not having enough data, having the wrong data, lacking the expertise to compile or examine their data critically, lacking resources of time or money to support data collection and analyses, and needing a more effective and consistent feedback loop to ensure the data is used effectively. The following steps are recommended:

- Continue supporting grantee capacity for program evaluation through convenings. It may be useful to survey grantees about their specific needs for training and create a time slot at a convening during which targeted work groups meet to address high-needs areas.
- Continue to structure application forms and annual reports in a manner that encourages reflection and evaluation based on data collection.
- To the extent appropriate, utilize established grantees' expertise to mentor newer grantees. This enables ArtsWA to strengthen arts programming and learning across the state and helps validate support for the long-term grantees.

Grant program evaluation. It will be useful for ArtsWA to continue to monitor the grant program outcomes. This will enable the staff to effect targeted program improvement. Input to the current evaluation consisted of grantee FY 2012 annual reports and interviews with grantees, partners, and ArtsWA personnel. This approach provided a depth of information pertaining to grantee and partner perceptions of grant implementation and impact. They also permit the diversity of these 19 programs to surface. However, limitations in resources prevented gathering additional data to underpin the grantee and partner reports. It is recommended that future evaluations incorporate additional data sources. This will require additional evaluation resources. The following recommendations are suggested:

- Identify an evaluation cycle for the grant program appropriate to ArtsWA's strategic planning, the Community Consortium Partnership Grant cycle, and program needs such as revision and advocacy.
- It may be useful to request sample outcomes data results from grantees, either on an ongoing basis or in future evaluations of the grant program. As part of a grant program evaluation, the results can be amassed into a narrative review to provide a deeper and clearer understanding of grant program outcomes. If this is pursued, it will be important to include this requirement in the grant materials at the outset of the grant cycle. A cover sheet with a common reporting format will make it easier for ArtsWA to use the data.
- To improve the quality of the grant program evaluation, it will be necessary to gather data from sources other than grantees and their partners. For example, additional focus group and interview data from a sampling of school personnel and students across grantees would strengthen program evaluation significantly.

Program expansion. A number of grantees are debating expansion, but many are concerned this would weaken their existing programs or be poorly executed due to insufficient resources. However, they are committed to providing quality arts learning for students and educators and reluctant to let these needs and requests go unmet. The following is recommended:

- Consider drawing on expansion efforts of current grantees as models. It may be useful to have a special workgroup during a convening for these advanced grantees to provide peer mentoring or to allow time for collaborative research on expansion models and strategies.

Grant program knowledge-sharing. Across grantees, there is a great wealth of experience, resources, and knowledge pertaining to strong classroom instruction and to working with schools and school systems. For example, teaching artists model instruction and performance-based assessments that are grounded in research-based principles of learning, and a number of

programs cultivate these practices in their classroom teachers. In addition, many of the organizations that exist outside the school systems have developed expertise in partnering with schools and districts. Other examples pertain to developing community and parent engagement in schools. The following is recommended:

- For grant program advocacy or for practical benefit to grantees, there may be value in identifying the unique expertise cultivated by these programs and exploring how it may be put to use. For example, there may be avenues for schools or districts to benefit more broadly from the presence of these instructional models. Connecting the expertise of the grantees to some of the general needs in education may improve sustainability and support. In addition, the collective strengths of these programs in areas that challenge schools and districts reflect on the value of the granting program, as a whole, and this may be useful for advocacy efforts.